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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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Halkin Sesi

CITE NUMBERS, DISTRIBUTION, CHARACTERISTICS OF BULGARIAN TURKS

The following information is taken from an article by Ali Kemal Balkanli, a former newspaperman in Bulgaria, written in connection with the current expulsion of Bulgarian Turks from Bulgaria;

It is impossible to learn from official Bulgarian statistics the real number of Turks living in Bulgaria. These statistics, for some ulterior motive, always show the Turkish population as much lower than it actually is. While the figure of 250,000 has been cited recently, the actual figure is at least three times greater. Before World War II, it was estimated that the Turkish minority in Bulgaria was between 700,000 and 800,000, although the Bulgarians never reported more than 600,000. If the several hundred thousand Pomaks are added, we may say that the Moslem minority is, in round figures, one million.

The Turkish minority is concentrated in the Deliorman area along the Danube, in the Rhodopes, and in the Kazanlik lowlands. The first area embraces the okoliyas of Shumen, Razgrad, Varna, Provadiya, Isperikh, Novi Pazar, Omortag, Turgovishte, and Preslav; the second includes the okoliyas of Kurdzhali, Smolyan, Ardino, Zlatograd, Momchilgrad, Krumovgrad, and Khaskovo; the third encompasses the okoliyas of Karlovo and (partia] Kazanlik. Turks also live, though more scattered, in the vicinities of Plovdiv, Asenovgrad, Vidin, Lom, Vratsa, Oryakhovo, Turnovo, Karnobat, Aitos, Stara Zagora, Peshtera, and Sevlievo.

These Turks are descended from settlers who came from Anatolia and, as a result, they still have the Turkish national characteristics including strong religiousness. Three quarters of a century of persecution have only made them more resistant to assimilation. In consequence, very few Turkish youths have married Bulgarian girls, or Turkish girls, Bulgarian youths.

Former governments, especially Agrarian, were very tolerant and accorded the Turkish element favorable opportunities for development. At one time, there were 1,200 Turkish schools and 1,700 teachers in Bulgaria. Twenty Turkish-language newspapers were published. Clubs, reading centers, and

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various societies existed in most towns and villages; there was a teachers' union which held an annual congress, towns and villages had schools, Islamic societies, vakifs [religious trusts], and local muftis, while there were also district and provincial muftis. There was also a religious college in Shumen, as well as a teachers' college. All this has now changed, of course.

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